

CAMP 5

Camp Wing and Three Open Space Land Purchases Approved

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

At the special town meeting Monday night, over 600 Duxbury residents voted loudly and unanimously to support 4 open space land purchases of almost 400 acres including the 354 acre Camp Wing property for a total cost of \$2.2 million.

"This is an historic night for Duxbury," said Arthur Vautrain of the Conservation Commission, which sponsored the open space articles.

"This is an excellent opportunity to do the right thing," said William Zachmann of the planning board. "The one guaranteed way to prevent development is if the town acquires open space."

The 4 open space purchases include the land known as

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Camp Wing off Keene St. in northwest Duxbury; 4.76 acres on Summer St.; 11.06 acres on Union Street; and 4.3 acres on Mayflower St.

Now, residents must approve funding for these articles by voting for them at a special town election on Saturday, June 13. This funding will be in the form of a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion. A debt exclusion is a temporary tax increase. If a majority of the voters approve the ballot questions, then the town's levy limit – the revenue the town raises from real estate and personal property taxes – is temporarily increased only for the amount voted at the referendum. A Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion is an override but it is not a general override, which most people may think of when they hear about raising taxes over the Proposition 2 1/2 ceiling. A general override is different allows the town to permanently increase its levy limit by an amount voted at the referendum.

According to Vincent Walsh of the Fiscal Advisory Committee, the cost of the 4 open space purchases will amount to an extra \$44 a year on the average homeowner's tax bill. The value of average home is defined as \$241,000. Walsh said there will be a 15 year loan of \$2.2 million at 5% interest. The additional \$44 will be reduced for each year of the 15 year debt, so by the end of the loan, the cost to an average homeowner will be \$26 a year. Also, the town will hear in the next few days whether it has received a \$500,000 "self-help" grant from the state, which will reduce the extra taxes to about \$33 a year for the average homeowner.

The special town meeting in the high school auditorium was so crowded it had overflow seating in the adjoining cafeteria. An estimated 600 people attended.

Residents started their open space buying spree by unanimously passing the Camp Wing article with loud applause. The total cost of this land is \$1.613 million, which includes \$1.56 million for 354 acres of land and the associated costs.

The Camp Wing land, which was sold to the town by Crossroads for Kids, Inc., the organizers of summer camps for low-income children, contains 245 acres of freshwater wetlands and 109 acres of upland that includes woods. It has 3,000 ft. of road frontage on Keene and Franklin Sts. It also contains the junction of 2 tributaries, the headwaters of the South River and in addition, is home to several endangered species and lots of wildlife, such as deer, coyotes, otter and mink. Also, this land is in the Zone 2 water protection district for a well in Marshfield.

The Camp Wing land could have been subdivided into 17 to 33 single family homes, depending on their septic system needs. With a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals, it could have been developed into as many as 100 homes, according to Conservation Administrator Joseph Grady.

In the second land purchase, the town approved 4.76 acres on Summer St. near the Pembroke town line for a total cost of \$126,905. This land has 800 feet of frontage on Summer St., and it provides an open farm vista as well as a historic cow tunnel under the road and a historic barn foundation. It also has wetlands that may be the source of Keene's Brook, which flows into South River. The cost of the land is \$122,700 and \$4,205 are for additional costs, such as lawyer's fees.

The third land purchase bought 11.06 acres off Union Street in west Duxbury. This rectangular piece of land will fill in a missing corner of 75 acres of existing conservation land off Union St. It is mostly upland and

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contains a variety of trees, including hemlock, birch, beech and others not frequently seen in Duxbury. It is lined with old stone walls. The cost of this purchase is \$107,362.

The final open space article approved by town meeting was 4.1 acres of upland on Mayflower St. This land is heavily wooded, abuts the Knapp Town Forest, and is considered by many to be already part of the forest. The cost is \$361,791. It could have accommodated a 4-lot subdivision. The lot also abuts land reserved for a future well that is owned by the Water Department and \$103,253 of the purchase price will be paid for by the Water Department to protect the well's recharge zone.

Residents at special town meeting also unanimously voted to protect one of the town's wells in a fifth land acquisition article. Half an acre at 109 South Station St. containing a 1 bedroom house was approved for \$137,326. This will be funded out of the Water Department's water enterprise account, which has a balance of \$385,053. This purchase will help protect the Partridge Rd. well from contamination.